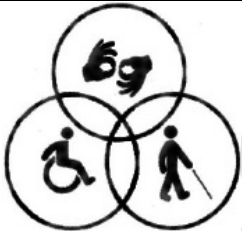


Fall 2003



Disability Services Beacon

Information and Resources from the
Fairfax Area Disability Services Board

Voting Made Easier and More Private

Want to vote, but it's difficult for you to make it to the polling place or to use the old voting machines? Tired of filling out a paper ballot and sharing your vote with the person who helps you fill it out?

Voters with disabilities and other health issues will be able to vote more easily and in complete privacy beginning with this November's election. Fairfax County has replaced its voting machines with the AVS WinVote™ Voting System, a state-of-the-art touch-screen voting machine that meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for voting accessibility. The lightweight machines, about the size of a large lap top computer, are fully

equipped to enable voting by persons with a wide range of disabilities, eliminating the need for paper ballots for most voters.

These machines, which run on battery power, can easily be unplugged from their stations and taken out to people wanting to vote curbside. The election officers simply bring the machine outside to the voters, who can then vote in the privacy of their cars. The machine can also be placed on a table for those voters who must sit to vote or for those who use a wheelchair. It can even be placed on the voter's lap.

The appearance of the screen can also be changed for voters with visual difficulties. Voters can use a “zoom” function that enlarges the ballot into easy-to-read type and shows only one race per screen. Voters who are visually impaired can use an earphone headset to hear the text and get instructions on how to cast their vote. Voters are told which quadrant on the screen to touch in order to make their selections, but nothing appears on the screen itself—the ballot is truly secret. Make

sure to tell your election official that you would like the ballot in either zoom or audio format if needed.

The new machines fulfill the requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), making it easier for all people to participate in our democratic process with greater ease and privacy. Like all technologies, the new machines may take some getting used to. But older people and people with disabilities who have tested the machines have been enthusiastic. The Electoral Board plans to bring the machines to local libraries and other public locations to help residents become familiar with them. For more information about the new machines and instructions on their use visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb/ and then click on “Voting Equipment Info.” Or call 703-222-0776, TTY 711.

You no longer have an excuse for not voting in Fairfax County. Vote, have your voice heard, and make a difference.

Curbside voting is available at all Fairfax County polling places and allows people who have difficulty walking into the polling place to vote at the curb. Look for signs directing you to the curbside voting location by your polling place. If you don't see a sign, pull up to the entrance to your polling place and ask! Poll workers, student election pages, and even those giving out partisan sample ballots, can go inside and let an election official know of your request. The election official will bring out the voting machine, allowing you to vote from the privacy of your car.

Disability Services Planning and Development

Disability Services Planning and Development (DSPD) is the information and referral source for people with physical and sensory disabilities in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. DSPD staff can answer most of your questions about topics such as the available

resources, accessible programs, and laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. If they can't answer your questions, they can refer you to people who can.

Current staff members are John Hudson, director, and Mike Hatfield and Carmen Sanchez, planners. Duane Stubbs volunteers in the office. You may contact DSPD staff or the DSB by calling 703-324-5421 or TTY 703-449-1186. Or you can send them an e-mail at disabilityservices@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Special Services Available from Telephone Companies

Most telephone companies offer special services for customers with visual, hearing and/or physical impairments. Services often include exemption from directory assistance charges and/or operator assisted calls. Applications are often required prior to account credits. Customers may also receive reduced rates using Virginia Relay service.

The names and phone numbers of long distance companies, cellular companies and the local service company, are listed below. Call for additional information and applications.

AT&T, 1-800-872-3883: For long distance calls only, customer is exempt from directory assistance charges for up to 50 calls per month. Customer must request an application from the Accessible Communications/Special Needs department and return it with a doctor's signature. Operator assistance calls are also exempt with a verbal request. For an application and information on reduced charges on TTY calls, call 1-800-833-3232.

MCI, 1-800-550-0930, TTY 1-800-374-4833: Free directory assistance for 50 calls per month. Customer must call Special Services and request an application. The application requires a doctor's signature.

Sprint, 1-800-877-4646, TTY 711: Free local and long distance directory assistance for 50 calls per month. Letter must be submitted for credit.

Verizon, 1-800-621-9900, TTY 711: With application approval, customers receive free unlimited directory and operator assistance calls for both local and long distance.

Fairfax Area Disability Services Board

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At-Large: Ann Zuvekas

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Mount Vernon District: Lou Genuario

Providence District: Rusty Glazer

Springfield District: Donna Martinez

Sully District: Ann Pimley

Problem Solving 101

by Duane Stubbs

For problems large and small, help is out there when you need it. You often need persistence to locate it. This a story about how one small person found help in a large system.

Ann lives in Fairfax County, and she has been totally blind since April 2001. Following her rehabilitation program, which included mobility instruction, she actively resumed her walking program along her familiar neighborhood sidewalks, relying on her white cane for safety and security. Unaware that a cable company was tearing up sidewalks and effectively turning her neighborhood route into an obstacle course, Ann set out for her daily walk. As she walked briskly along, her white cane detected a torn-up sidewalk. She could only detect one cone to mark the disruption, which she knew to be in violation of construction code requirements. Reversing course, she took another route.

She changed course on subsequent days to avoid obstacles, only to encounter them again in different locations within the neighborhood. Sidewalks were torn up, not passable, or improperly marked—all dangerous situations for a person with a visual disability. Ann called the cable company, but without success; her request didn't seem to be a high priority.

Finally, she decided to call Fairfax County Government to help rectify this situation. Not knowing who or what agency to contact, Ann called the Fairfax County Government Directory Assistance number (703-324-2000). The county operator directed her to several agencies that could help, one of which was the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), which in turn referred her to the VDOT Permits Division. That agency promptly directed the cable company to take the necessary action to remove obstacles on public sidewalks and to be in compliance with required safety measures for markings and barriers.

Later, thinking that the problem had been resolved, Ann again encountered a torn-up, improperly marked sidewalk. This time, however, Ann could have been seriously hurt. A passing vehicle driver observed that she was headed directly toward a torn-up section of sidewalk that was actually a deep hole. Stopping abruptly, the driver called out to alert Ann to the extremely dangerous situation immediately in front of her.

Determined that something must be done about this, she again called the VDOT Permits Division to report the continued failure of the cable company to be in compliance with safety requirements. Ann also asked if there was a government agency with enforcement authority that could take appropriate action in this case. She was given the number for the Fairfax County Department of Cable Communication and Consumer Protection. They took quick and effective action.

Determined not to be thwarted by frustration, Ann succeeded in getting her problem solved by calling on the county and state government agencies who

could refer her to the proper departments with the authority to correct the situation.

What can we learn from Ann's experience? There is help out there even for some unusual and unpredictable problems. If you don't know where to start, start with an information line. Overcome your frustration with perseverance until the problem is solved. Ann was groping in the dark, so to speak, to solve her problem but with persistence and several well placed calls, she solved her and her neighbors' problem. Her example can serve us all.

Disability Services Planning and Development publishes a directory of agencies, non-profits, and advocacy groups that can provide assistance and advocacy. You can get your copy of the updated *Frequently Called Numbers* by calling 703-324-5421 or TTY 703-449-1186, or by sending an e-mail to disabilityservices@fairfaxcounty.gov, or on the Web at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/service/dsb/.

The Next DSB Meeting is

on the second Monday of the month, 7:30-9:30

Pennino Building,
Room 206B
12011 Government
Center Parkway
Fairfax

Meetings are open to the public; public comment, no more than 3 minutes in length, is welcome during the public comment period. For information or to request accommodations, please call 703-324-5421, TTY 703-449-1186, or send an e-mail to disabilityservices@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Get Weekly Disability News

Disability Services E-News is a listserv that keeps subscribers informed about resources and issues that affect people with physical and sensory disabilities.

Disability Services Beacon

The listserv sends out one brief e-mail each week. The listserv is the primary vehicle for publicly announcing meetings and activities of the Disability Services Board and will in the future tell you how to get online issues of the *Disability Services Beacon*.

To subscribe, simply go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/email/lists/. Fill in your e-mail address, click on the box before “Disability services and news,” and then click subscribe. You will be sent an e-mail asking you to respond in order to finish subscribing. You must respond to this e-mail and write “ok” in the body to complete the subscription.

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services, and activities. This document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please call 703-324-5421 or TTY 703-449-1186, or send an email to disabilityservices@fairfaxcounty.gov. Allow 7 working days for preparation of the material.
